Pattison Receives 2001 Perrine Award for Pomology at Cornell

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by Linda McCandless

GENEVA, NY: Jeremy Pattison, a first-year graduate student in horticulture at Cornell University, received the 2001 Perrine Scholarship Award on March 9, in acknowledgement of his outstanding graduate work in pomology. Hugh Price, chairman of the horticultural sciences department at the New York State Agricultural Experiment Station, in Geneva, NY, presented the award to Pattison on behalf of the Perrine family. The scholarship was established by David Perrine (Cornell '22) in 1993 to support pomology research at Geneva. The $2,000 award supports Pattison's Ph.D. research program and educational expenses. Pattison is the sixth recipient of the award.

Suggested caption: James E. Hunter (left), director of the NYS Agricultural Experiment Station, congratulates Jeremy Pattison (right), recipient of the 2001 Perrine Award, for outstanding graduate work in pomology. CREDIT: Hickey/NYSAES/Cornell

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Pattison has six years of practical experience in horticulture and graduated from East Stroudsburg University in 2000. Most recently he served as a vineyard manager and winemaker's assistant. Since coming to Cornell to pursue his master's degree, he has worked under small fruit breeder Courtney Weber, at Geneva. Currently, Pattison conducts research on Phytophthora root rot in red raspberries, a disease that limits production in New York State and all other regions of the world. Because raspberries are perennial crops, developing resistance to this disease is important because the plants remain in the same location for years.

"The main goal of my project is to design a molecular screening procedure that can weed out the copious number of susceptible genotypes to breed raspberry populations in an efficient and cost effective manner and hasten the development of resistant cultivars," said Pattison.

"Phytophthora root rot is the most damaging disease of the crop," said Weber. "Jeremy's research will help us pinpoint the underlying genetic component of resistance and allow us to breed cultivars in the future that will resist the disease. Awards like the Perrine award really help graduate students do good research, and it makes them realize that people appreciate the work they are doing. I think Jeremy's contribution to fruit research is just beginning and this award will help him to succeed in his efforts," said Weber.

"I am very grateful to the Perrine family for initiating such a scholarship to support research in pomology," said Pattison. "It is programs and people like this that make Cornell University and the New York State Agricultural Experiment Station a place that perpetuates excellence by continually contributing significantly, in many forms, to the scientific community," he said.

Generous Benefactor

David Perrine was a prominent fruit grower in Centralia, Illinois. He established the scholarship in memory of his wife, Fanny French Perrine, whom he met at Cornell in the 1920s, when Fanny was studying bacteriology and David, pomology.

David and his brother, Alden (Cornell '47), farmed 600 acres of peaches, apples, and pears, and were partners in the Perrine Orchard. David had a long and distinguished career as an apple and peach grower, and was a leader in the fruit industry. He was president of the National Peach Council, a member of the National Apple Institute, and president of the Illinois State Horticultural Society. He died in 1996.

James Cummins, professor emeritus of horticultural sciences at Geneva, who knew the Perrines for more than 50 years, said David was the "best fruit grower in the Midwest." The Perrines were instrumental in Cummins continuing his studies in pomology at Cornell after he finished his undergraduate work at the University of Illinois. The families maintained a close friendship throughout the years.

"We are very fortunate to have such a generous benefactor," said Hugh Price. He noted that the scholarship has already helped launch the promising careers of five young horticulturists. In 1994, the first year it was awarded, the Perrine Scholarship was given to Patrick Conner, a doctoral student in pomology whose

research with Susan Brown focused on the genetic mapping of apples and the identification of certain sequences in the apple genome that determine traits, such as size, flavor, and color. Conner is currently an Assistant Professor at the University of Georgia. In 1995, Thomas E. Clark received the award while he was pursuing a master's degree at Cornell, working with Terence Robinson. In 1996, Chris Owens received the award. He worked with Ed Stover on two projects in plant growth regulators at the Hudson Valley Lab, and is currently pursuing his Ph.D at Michigan State. The 1998 recipient, Laurie Boyden, continues to conduct research with Susan Brown. Kuo-Tan Li, last year's recipient, works with Alan Lakso, studying the impact of summer pruning on apple trees.

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